United Nations

Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Body of Lieutenant-Colonel William Higgins identified and handed over to United States Embassy in Lebanon.

- Security Council calls for further study of materials and supplies needed for essential civilian and humanitarian aid to Iraq.

- General Assembly President calls attention to "landmark accomplishments" in statement suspending forty-sixth session; Assembly authorizes $2.4 billion in appropriations for 1992-1993 and calls for global moratorium on "drift-net" fishing, among other things, before concluding its work.

- Secretary-General to send small team of experts and support staff to Luanda to prepare for United Nations mission to observe elections in Angola; appeals for $167.4 million for humanitarian assistance.

- United Nations delegation observes opening of first plenary session of Convention for Democratic South Africa in Johannesburg.

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The Secretary-General has been informed by his Special Envoy Giandomenico Picco that the body of Lieutenant-Colonel William Higgins had been identified at the American University Hospital in Beirut and had been handed over to the United States Embassy in Lebanon.

In a statement through his Spokesman today, he said that with this development "a dark chapter in the history of the United Nations peace-keeping had been closed". He said he wished to express to Colonel Higgins' widow and to his family his heartfelt condolences on this sad occasion.

Colonel Higgins was serving with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in southern Lebanon at the time of his abduction on 17 February 1988. His captors announced his execution on 31 July 1989.

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Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar said he would continue his efforts with determination to bring about the release of the remaining hostages and those detained without due process of law, notably Sheik Obeid and the Lebanese detained in southern Lebanon and Israel, as well as the return of the Israeli servicemen missing in action. He said he deeply regretted the brief abduction of three Lebanese in southern Lebanon last Friday which already had had a negative effect on his efforts.

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The Security Council has called for further study of the materials and supplies needed for essential civilian and humanitarian aid to Iraq with a view to alleviating the humanitarian conditions for the civilian population.

The Council President, Yuliy Vorontsov (Soviet Union) made the announcement Friday evening following consultations of the Council on the subject.

In his statement, the President said the Council had also decided to request the Secretary-General to prepare a report on Iraq's compliance with resolution 687 (1991), setting the conditions for the cease-fire in the Persian Gulf conflict, and subsequent relevant resolutions, which will be taken up by the Council at its next review session. Mr. Vorontsov pointed out that the Council had noted that Iraq has not yet used the possibility for oil sales as permitted by resolutions 706 (1991) and 712 (1991) to finance its humanitarian relief needs.

In a separate development, the Council held consultations throughout the day on the situation in Western Sahara and in Cyprus.

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The President of the General Assembly, Samir S. Shihabi (Saudi Arabia), on Friday, 20 December, suspended the forty-sixth session calling attention to some of the "landmark accomplishments" of the session. Those included the institutionalization of the Office of the President of the Assembly; the strengthening of the humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations; and efforts towards the restructuring of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields.

Pointing to the number of resolutions adopted during the present session, Mr. Shihabi said the body had been able to achieve "mergers where possible, consensus where desirable and reductions where practicable". He also noted that "constructive deliberations at a time when the world was witnessing the heralding of a new and more positive era in international relations" had confirmed the effective role of the United Nations and the centrality of the General Assembly.

Before concluding its work, the Assembly adopted a programme budget for the United Nations, authorizing some $2.4 billion dollars for the biennium 1992-1993, and over $2.5 billion for expenditures.

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In other action, the Assembly called upon the international community to implement a global moratorium on all large-scale pelagic high seas drift-net fishing by 31 December 1992, on the recommendation of its Economic and Financial Committee; deplored the establishment of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem; and called for the immediate lifting of Israeli restrictions and obstacles hindering the implementation of assistance by the United Nations and others to the Palestinian people in the occupied territories.

By a text on the consequences of the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, the Assembly urgently appealed to Member States, organizations, scientific bodies and individuals to provide assistance for the study and mitigation of the environmental deterioration of the region. By another text it urged Member States to protect the human rights and dignity of persons infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), people with AIDS and members of particular population groups, and to avoid discriminatory action against them.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar has initiated preparations for the sending of a small team of experts and support staff to Luanda, Angola, for United Nations technical assistance for upcoming elections in that country.

On Friday, 20 December, he informed the Security Council of his intentions to recommend that the Council authorize a United Nations mission to monitor elections in the country.

The Secretary-General is responding to a request by Angola for the sending of United Nations observers who will follow the electoral procedure until its completion in the fall of 1992.

In a statement issued through his Spokesman, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar said that internationally supervised elections constituted the central element in the implementation of the Angola Peace Accords. The monitoring should cover the entire electoral process, including voter registration, he said.

In related news, the Secretary-General has appealed for about $167.5 million for urgent humanitarian assistance to Angola. The assessment identifies target groups of refugees and returnees, internally displaced persons, abandoned children, and demobilized soldiers totalling 1.4 million people who need urgent food and non-food assistance to survive and to return to normal, productive lives.

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The United Nations was invited to observe the opening of the first plenary session of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa in Johannesburg over the weekend.

The United Nations delegation was headed by Ambassador Ibrahim Gambari of Nigeria, the Chairman of the Anti-Apartheid Committee; the Secretary-General's

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Personal Representative, Mrs. Sadako Ogata, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); as well as Mr. Sotirios Mousouris, Assistant Secretary-General for the Centre Against Apartheid.

In a statement at the plenary meeting, Mrs. Ogata said the Secretary-General had expressed the hope that all parties would be able to participate in the deliberations of the Convention, so that its final outcome may be the fullest expression of the will of all the people of South Africa.

She said the United Nations would observe the deliberations and was ready to provide assistance in the ongoing process of transforming South Africa as and when requested by South Africans.

Speaking in her capacity as High Commissioner, Mrs. Ogata said that the agreement reached earlier this year between the South African Government and the UNCHR, after 501 days of difficult negotiations, had paved the way for the voluntary return of South African exiles and refugees. To date, some 420 South Africans had been repatriated and everything had been proceeding smoothly.

In a statement to the press, Nigerian Ambassador Gambari said the Special Committee against Apartheid was particularly gratified to witness the launching of a process for which it has campaigned for so long. He gave the full and concerted support to the critical process on behalf of the Committee.

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